Enets language

Enets is a moribund Samoyedic language of Northern Siberia spoken on the Lower Yenisei within the boundaries of the Taimyr Municipality District, a subdivision of Krasnoyarsk Krai, Russia Federation. The language is moribund. Around 10 fluent speakers are left; the overall number of potential speakers is less than 40 individuals. All speakers are found in the generation of 50 years and older. Recent local statistics indicate that there are around 260 individuals of ethnic Enets origin. Enets belongs to the Northern branch of the Samoyedic languages, in turn a branch of the Uralic language family.[4]

Enets	
Онэй база (*Onei baza*)[1]	
Native to	Russia
Region	Krasnoyarsk Krai, along the lower Yenisei River
Ethnicity	260 Enets people (2010 census)
Native speakers	43 (2010 census)[2]
Language family	Uralic - Samoyedic (core) - Enets–Nenets **Enets**
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	Either: `enf` – Forest Enets `enh` – Tundra Enets
Glottolog	`enet1250` (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/enet1250)[3]

Contents

Dialects

There are two distinct dialects, Forest (Bai) Enets and Tundra (Madu or Somatu) Enets, which may be considered separate languages.

Forest Enets is the smaller of the two Enets dialects. In the winter of 2006/2007, approximately 35 people spoke it (6 in Dudinka, 20 in Potapova and 10 in Tukhard, the youngest of whom was born in 1962 and the oldest in 1945). Many of these speakers are trilingual, with competence in Forest Enets, Tundra Nenets and Russian, preferring to speak Tundra Nenets.

The two dialects differ both in phonology and in lexicon. Additional variation was found in early Enets records from the 17th to 19th centuries, though all these varieties can be assigned as either Tundra Enets or Forest Enets.[5]

Phonological differences:

- In some words, Forest Enets /s/ corresponds to Tundra Enets /ɟ/ (from Proto-Samoyedic *ms, *ns, *rs and *rkʲ).
  - Forest *mese* — Tundra *me ɟe* 'wind' (from *merse < *märkʲä);
  - Forest *osa* — Tundra *u ɟa* 'meat' (from *ʊnsa < *əmså);
- In some words, Forest Enets word-initial /na/ corresponds to Tundra Enets /e/ (from Proto-Samoyedic *a- > *ä-).
- Certain vowel + glide sequences of Proto-Samoyedic have different reflexes in Forest Enets and Tundra Enets.
- Forest Enets word-initial /ɟi/ corresponds to Tundra Enets /i/.

Lexical differences:

- Forest *eba* — Tundra *aburi* 'head'
- Forest *baða* — Tundra *nau* 'word'
- Forest *ʃaru* — Tundra *oma* 'tobacco'

Orthography

Enets is written using the Cyrillic alphabet, though it includes the letters ɛ, ꞑ, and ҫ which are not used in the Russian alphabet.

А а	Б б	В в	Г г	Д д	Е е	Ё ё	Ɛ ɛ
Ж ж	З з	И и	Й й	К к	Л л	М м	Н н
Ꞑ ꞑ	О о	П п	Р р	С с	Ҫ ҫ	Т т	У у
Ф ф	Х х	Ц ц	Ч ч	Ш ш	Щ щ	ъ	Ы ы
ь	Э э	Ю ю	Я я				

The written form of the Enets language was created during the 1980s and has been used to produce a number of books. During the 1990s there was an Enets newspaper, Советский Таймыр (Soviet Taimyr) published and brief Enets broadcasts on local radio, which shut down in 2003,[6] served as supplements for speakers.[7]

Syntax

The syntax of Enets is typical for the family and the area. The Enets language follows SOV, head marking in the noun phrase, both head and dependent marking within the clause, non-finite verbal forms used for clause combining.

Grammar

Enets nouns vary for number, case, and person-number of the possessor. There is also an intriguing nominal case in which 'destinativity' determines the entity is destined for someone. Possessor markers are also used for discourse related purposes, where they are completely devoid of the literal possessive meaning. Enets

postpositions are marked for person-number; many postpositions are formed from a small set of relational nouns and case morphology.[8]

Phonology

Phoneme Inventory

The following phonemes are combined from all of the different dialects of the Enets languages; Enets (Künnap 1999),[9] Forest Enets (Siegl 2013),[10] Tundra Enets (Nikolaeva 2014).[11]

Vowels

	Front	Central	Back
High	i	ɨ	u
Middle	e, ɛ	ə	o
Low	æ	a	ɑ, ɒ

Consonants

	bilabial	dental	palatal	velar	post-velar
stops	p, b	t, d	pʲ, bʲ, tʲ, dʲ	k, g	q, ʔ
affricates		t͡s, t͡ʃ	t͡sʲ, t͡ʃʲ		
fricatives		s, ʃ, ð	sʲ, ʃʲ	x	h
nasals	m	n	mʲ, nʲ	ŋ	
laterals		l	lʲ		
trills		r	rʲ		
glides	w		j		

1. There is partial or complete vowel reduction in the middle and at the end of a word
2. Consonants preceding *i* and *e* become palatalized[12]

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External links

- Enets bibliography (https://web.archive.org/web/20080119143810/http://www.tooyoo.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/Russia/bibl/Enets.html)
- Bibliography (https://web.archive.org/web/20080602053011/http://lepo.it.da.ut.ee/~flos/Enets_bibliography.htm) on Enets studies
- Linguistic items (http://www.nganasanica.de/enets.html) (Texts, vocabularies, links, ...)
- ELAR archive of Enets language documentation materials (http://elar.soas.ac.uk/deposit/0302)